

The Weekend That Changed The World

By Douglas Eadline

Five so far, I thought. Five innocent children slaughtered in a one room Amish school house in central Pennsylvania. The others, wounded, only time will tell. A man with some motive any motive did this. Who knew. Who really knew this man. Now the analysis and solutions spew from the media. He was normal or he was troubled. He had issues or he was a loving father. Hey listeners, lock your doors, take away the guns, buy more guns, we need to prevent this from happening again. Although, hand guns, jails, and metal detectors are not really the Amish way.

Thirty two at Virginia Tech. More targets, more bullets. And, in the end, the ultimate passive aggressive act is always, the same. Take them out, then take yourself out. Put a period at the end of your incoherent sentence. A message so heinously attractive it goes right to the top of the news pile. You are guaranteed your fifteen minutes. Maybe more if you do it right. Now we blame again. The dance continues.

What went wrong. We want to know. I want to know. This tragedy can't happen again. What is the first step, anger, then revenge, oh but he is dead. Now what. Blame is good. Blame someone or something, anything, because when I blame, then I know the reason. And, if I know the reason, I can stop this from happening to me. Forty nine reasons why it happens to them and not me. It is about them, not me. Apparent safety soothes me now.

Deep down, I'm still scared. I'm still a loner. Someone has to fix my fear and solve my problems. I'm angry because they don't. It is all their fault I'm afraid of the havoc your secrets will bring to my world. How can I trust the worst of you. The mirror is hard to face. And yet, after years of searching my answers seem to lie within.



Why are you here?

Journey

As I drive through the bucolic countryside of eastern Pennsylvania, I think about the next three days. I'll be away from my family, living instead with other men. Men with secrets, men who like me believe this planet could use a little more comfort and a little less misery. Men who have decided to do something about it. We are not headline men, we work local and as we believe, change globally. On most scales we are average men, at least I am. One thing is for sure, however, we will change the world this weekend.

Almost there. The plan for changing the world is not what most would imagine. Changing the world is hard work. It takes time and commitment. There is no fast track, no pill, no video tape, no simple fix. As a

matter of fact, we don't change anyone or anything, we provide an invitation to change, to grow up and change yourself. We know, however, that change is hard and almost impossible to do alone, so we hold up a mirror and invite you to take look. Yes, the world will change this weekend because brave men have had enough.



Where are today's men?

Initiation

Trusting other men seems simple enough, yet our society somehow seems unable to trust itself. Rules and laws all do their job of ensuring life is fair (for some), but do they help me trust you with what is really important. Can I trust that when you learn the darkest secret about me, that you will not run away shouting, "Look at this wicked sick man." When push comes to shove, can I trust that you will not run away. Will you stand as a man or run as boy?

What then does one do to become a man in this world. When I grew up the television and movies showed men protecting/avenging victims (women and children usually) with violence. The good men did it in less than thirty minutes (with commercials). Were it that simple. As I grew older, I found such role models really did not help much. Being a husband, a father, a provider, a friend, now that was the real challenge. And, that was my failure. Somehow, I never learned these skills. My father did the best he could, as did his father. When I was in my middle thirties, I was alone, afraid, and clueless about how to navigate my life and how to be a man. The easy road

I traveled was paved with blame, anger, and most of all fear.

In my judgment, my situation was neither unique or new. In addition, I believe there are somethings we as society are very confused about. Ancient societies had a similar problem. If I'm hunting with you so we (and our tribe) can eat, I need to know what is going to happen when you get scared. If you run, then nobody eats (including me). And the same goes for you. Will I run when the lion approaches? Going at it alone was not an option.

Initiation helps solve this problem. Take a boy and challenge his fear. If he stands like the kind of man we need, mark him so we know he can be trusted and is expected to do man things. Primitive, yes. Effective, very. When men are initiated, they have a basis for trust and leave the excuses of childhood behind. Little boys don't have the marks, men do.

In my experience, young men are screaming for initiation. The need to prove yourself, the need be marked as a man is everywhere. After all, women have babies with men, not boys. In the absence of healthy initiation boys have taken to initiating themselves. Joining a street gang or a college fraternity often require some form of unhealthy initiation (hazing). The end result is the same, however. If you pass the test, you are on our side, you are not alone, we trust you more than before. These type of initiations are not complete, however. They serve a purpose, sometimes noble, more often abusive. What is often missing are the elders, the initiated men. Men with scars.

Our society is full of initiation in some form or another. Trying to "fit in" is part of growing up. Financial success seems to shout "manhood" in our society. Acquiring things for oneself, at the expense of others, surely must prove we are men and maybe even kings. In my experience, such conquests never got me what I truly wanted. Men who have fought in war tell me of the bonds developed in the heat of battle. Such initiations are powerful and true, yet paid for in blood. And, many of those warrior men have told me they would not wish such trials on

anyone. How then do I become a man? And, ultimately how do I co-create a more gentle world where my child is safe.

Arrival

It is Thursday afternoon and I have arrived at my weekend destination. Other men, the training staff, are here as well. All have been initiated, all are ready to do what it takes to make the weekend initiation experience powerful and safe for the men arriving on Friday. For some staff this is their first chance help initiate men, for others, there has been countless hours of additional training and preparation. There is much work to be done by everyone. A team must be built. A team that will function like no other I have experienced. Bravery is not in short supply here nor is trust or leadership.

For me, this is where I can hear the world breathe. A place like no other in my life. This is my Sparta. The place where I make my stand. No bloodshed, and yet honor, glory, and triumph are all mine. The price is trust. If I take the risk and trust the circle of men on this weekend, victory is mine. Nowhere else can I dance with truth. Nowhere else can I sit in the cool breeze that is left by the hand of God as it passes through the souls of men. Nowhere else.

The mission of the team is simple. Build a safe container where new men (or initiates) can experience a healthy initiation by giving them a chance to push themselves physically, spiritually, and emotionally farther than they ever thought possible. There is no failure here. The world depends on these brave men who chose to become initiated.

On Friday evening the new men arrive. They are ready. The entire weekend is well crafted and yet each initiation experience is unique. On Sunday, the world will be different for all men who dance together this weekend -- both staff and initiates.

Marking A Man

I was initiated near Washington DC in July of 1992. I had no idea what to expect. I went because I was looking for something. I was happily married and approaching my sixth year anniversary. Well, maybe not happy. I loved my wife, I enjoyed my work, the world was there for the taking and still I felt broken in some way. Something was missing. I was thirty six years old, had a good education, more than most, a nice house, and a secret. My way of interacting with the world was just not working. I had it all figured out in my head somehow. And, it was not working for me. I was not happy, I was scared most of the time and I was afraid to admit it because, if I showed vulnerability, I could get hurt. If you asked, I told you everything was fine, life is good, I have no warts. Holding up the facade was a lot of work and now in my mid-thirties, I was getting tired. Real tired.

At the invitation of a friend, I managed to get myself to an initiation weekend. The official name of the weekend is the New Warrior Training Adventure (NWTa). Adventure is the right word. I traveled to the edge of my being and survived. For me, the weekend was like kicking over my personal apple cart. All the things I thought I knew about me were gone. Now my task was to pick up the apples I wanted to keep and throw the others away. For the first time, in my life I felt like I was whole -- or at least I could become whole. For the first time, I did not feel broken, my secret was out and I was safe. I was more than alive, I was stronger. For the first time I stood as a man and I was not alone.

As time went on I continued to work on my apple cart. I did not do it alone. The NWTa weekend is also designed to spawn local men's groups. In my area three men and I started a local group of initiated men. Today we number fourteen and through the years we have had over forty men journey through the group. While the initiation weekend woke me up, a circle of local men keeps me awake and aware in my life. The breeze at dawn has something to tell me and now I can hear it.

The ManKind Project

In the mid 1980s, three men, Ron Hering, Bill Kauth and Rich Tosi, began what is now known as The ManKind Project by creating the first "New Warrior Training Adventure" (NWTA). Originally, it was called the "Wildman Weekend" and was based in part on the book "Iron John", by Robert Bly. Initiation was a key component. If you visit the MKP website (<http://www.mkp.org>) you can learn much about this world changing organization.

We men are still warriors. In the past, this powerful energy has allowed us to protect our children, our women, and our communities. In modern societies, however, warrior energy is often repressed and discouraged. The old warrior archetype does not work in much of today's world. Deep warrior energy cannot be destroyed, however. Left alone it can manifest in unhealthy ways and create mercenaries who slash and burn their way through life. Channeled and mentored, it can turn a boy into a man of integrity, power, and passion and literally change the world. The New Warrior has arrived.

There are thirty eight MKP centers spanning the world today and the numbers are growing. Communities, like the one in Philadelphia, continue to grow and initiate new men several times a year. Aspects of the initiation are held in secret, however. Outside the context of the weekend experience they often make little sense. Besides, the weekend is designed to invite a man into his manhood in his own way. What really happens on the weekend is about the changes that occur within a man. Of these powerful life altering changes, men will often freely share.

The lack of information about the NWTA weekend activities, has brought accusations of a cult or some kind of brainwashing religion. Such accusations are curious as the entire NWTA weekend and any continued involvement with MKP is by invitation. Indeed, New Warriors often speak of being free from cultural, family, and personal rules that have constrained them in the past. A New Warrior must discover and live *his* own mission.

A Journey Continues

It is Sunday afternoon. I am tired and awake. There are no more initiates. They are now initiated men. New brothers in a new world. Their faces are different. Eyes are open, often sparkling and anything is possible now. Each man has taken a new mission in life. He has a higher purpose, not to merely survive, but to change the world in his way with his passion. The battle is won.

My mission has changed over the years. Today my mission is "To teach the world a gentle song, by speaking truth." It is my quest, never done, and always worthwhile. I live my mission everyday. It may not yet stop battles raging across the planet, but it quells the battle in my heart. A battle that I would normally spill on to my family, friends, co-workers, and you.



Transformation is possible

Triumph

A week or so following the initiation, a public graduation is held. Families and friends are invited to witness and speak about these wonderful brave men. Faces still glowing as joy abounds. Tears come easily as loved ones tell of the changes they see in "their man". Authentic emotion is everywhere as the warriors return triumphant to the village. The room is dancing with unconditional love. We all want that, at least I do.

As the chairs are folded, men are reminded that this is the beginning of their journey. Living their

missions and being man are hard things to do alone. Much of the success of the ManKind Project is the creation of Men's groups that continue the journey started on the weekend. My Men's group has been in existence over ten years and it continues to change me and the world. In addition, initiated New Warriors often head back into the forest and help initiate other men.

Invitation

The world changes when we change from the inside. Telling someone how to live their life is telling them they are wrong. Living an authentic life of accountability and integrity is telling them what you expect of yourself and others. Perhaps, just perhaps, if men that harm, that dump their internal battles onto others, could at some point step into a strong container of initiated men, our world would be different.

To this day, when I read in the paper about the atrocities occurring around the world and around the corner, my initial reaction is still anger and a need for swift violent justice of some kind. I take a breath and know that true change comes from within and my fear steps away. The Warrior, the Lover, the Magician, and the King that I am knows where the real battle lies. And my battle rages even today. At times, I still run, taking the easy way of rage and blame. I don't stay there long, there are too many brave warriors in my life who know me as a man, who can see my pain, who will reach down into the black pit and help pull me out. There is no more noble a battle than this.

All those I love, including me, are a little bit safer tonight because brave men helped me change my world one weekend many years ago. There is hope, happiness, and love in my life now. A wish I have for all people.

If you are still reading, then welcome. Maybe something touched you as you read. If it did, don't let it slip from your hands. What you may be sensing is the need for more meaning, more adventure, and change in your life. Take the risk, step off the treadmill and contact MKP. Find and talk to initiated men. If you see something in them you like, ask them how they got it. And when you are ready, attend the NWT weekend. The world is changing for the better one man at a time. **We need men like you.**

End Notes:

While this article focused on men, there are certainly brave women who change the world as well. Indeed, MKP is closely allied with Women Within (<http://www.womanwithin.org>) organization that offers educational opportunities for women to discover the power of who they are and encourages women to communicate this in their relationships, families, workplaces and communities.

You are also invited to read the book *Iron John* by Robert Bly. Vintage Publishing, ISBN: 0679731199.

Finally, to attend The New Warrior Adventure Training or to learn more about the ManKind Project please visit the MKP web site: <http://www.mkp.org>

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